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CONTACT: Jan Strasma (630) 829-9663
Viktoria Mitlyng (630) 829-9662

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E-mail: opa3@nrc.gov

NRC DISPATCHES A TEAM OF EXPERTS TO EVALUATE FIRSTENERGY'S TOOLS FOR ASSESSING SAFETY CULTURE AT DAVIS-BESSE

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will conduct a special inspection to evaluate the processes used at the Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station to assess safety culture improvements. Weaknesses in the plant's safety culture were identified as key contributors in the corrosion of the reactor vessel head, which has resulted in the plant's extended shutdown since February 16, 2002. The plant, located in Oak Harbor, Ohio, is operated by FirstEnergy Nuclear Operating Company (FENOC).

The inspectors will assess the scope of FENOC's approach and its methods for collecting and evaluating data and developing conclusions regarding safety culture and safety conscious work environment. In addition, the NRC team will evaluate the external safety culture assessment performed by Performance, Safety, and Health Associates, Inc. for FENOC. The team will also review the utility's plans for future monitoring in this area and the implementation of the Employee Concerns Program.

The NRC's Oversight Panel, which has been coordinating the agency's activities at Davis-Besse following the identification of reactor head degradation, will use the results of this special inspection, combined with results from other completed and ongoing inspections, to evaluate the effectiveness of the utility's management and human performance corrective actions. This aspect of plant performance is critical to safe facility restart and operation.

The seven-member inspection team led by Geoffrey Wright, a senior inspector in NRC's Region III office, includes experts in human performance and organizational effectiveness, as well as former industry executives who have a track record of improving safety culture at problem nuclear power plants. Two members of the safety culture inspection team are outside consultants; and the other five members are current NRC employees. The members are listed below and their biographies are attached to this release.

Inspection Team Members:

Geoffrey Wright, Team Leader - NRC Region III.

Clare Goodman - Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, NRC Headquarters.

Lisa Jarriel - Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, NRC Headquarters.

Richard Pelton - NRC Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, NRC Headquarters.

Julius Persensky - NRC Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research, NRC Headquarters.

John Beck - consultant, Little Harbor Associates

Michael Brothers - consultant, Brothers Engineering and Consulting

The inspection team will begin the onsite inspection the week of April 7. The results of the inspection will be presented during a public meeting, and an inspection report will be available approximately four weeks after the public meeting on the NRC's web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reactors/operating/ops-experience/vessel-head-degradation.html>. The date, time and place of the meeting will be announced in a future press release.

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NRC'S SAFETY CULTURE INSPECTION TEAM

Geoffrey Wright, Team Leader, is an expert in evaluating safety performance at nuclear power plants. He has 31 years of experience in various aspects of nuclear power facility engineering and operation working in the nuclear power industry and for the NRC. Mr. Wright is currently a senior project engineer in NRC's Region III office in Lisle, Illinois.

Julius Persensky is an expert in human factors and behavioral science technologies in the work environment. He holds a Ph.D. in Applied Psychology and has 30 years of experience in the field. Prior to joining the NRC, Dr. Persensky was a senior behavioral scientist at the National Institutes for Science and Technology and currently is the senior technical advisor for human factors in the NRC's Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research in Rockville, Maryland.

Lisamarie Jarriel is a expert with 21 years experience in nuclear safety, safety conscious work environment and employee concerns program implementation. She has experience in nuclear safety analysis and managing the safety conscious work environment at a nuclear facility. Ms. Jarriel is currently the NRC's senior advisor on allegation policy in the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation in Rockville, Maryland.

Clare Goodman is an expert with 30 years experience evaluating human performance issues. She has managed and monitored analyses of human performance and organizational effectiveness, training, organizational communications, and safety culture at nuclear power plants. Ms. Goodman is currently a senior human factors specialist in NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation in Rockville, Maryland.

Richard Pelton is an expert in training and root cause assessment. He has 35 years of experience evaluating human performance, training and root cause evaluations. He has reviewed and inspected nuclear power plant operator training and licensing programs. He is currently a training and assessment specialist in NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation in Rockville, Maryland.

John Beck is an expert in safe nuclear facility operation. He has 36 years of nuclear management experience serving as Chief Operating Officer, Executive Vice President, Vice President and Director of Engineering for three different successful nuclear utilities. Mr. Beck is currently the President and Chief Executive Officer of Little Harbor Associates in Cohasset, Massachusetts, an organization that specializes in safety culture and safety conscious work environment at nuclear facilities. Little Harbor Associates provided a key role in the recovery of the safety conscious work environment at the Millstone facility in the mid-1990s.

Michael Brothers is an expert in safe nuclear facility operation. He has 27 years nuclear safety experience. Mr. Brothers is a Registered Professional Engineer and has held an NRC Senior Reactor Operator license. His career in the nuclear industry involved positions of increasing responsibility culminating as Vice President of Nuclear Operations at the Millstone facility overseeing recovery of the safety conscious work environment and safe operation of that facility. Mr. Brothers is currently owner of Brothers Engineering and Consulting in Niantic, Connecticut.

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